

SOLVING A MYSTERY

“This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.” —EPHESIANS 3:6

Mostly everyone loves the idea of a mystery. Interestingly, the claim is that after the Bible, followed by the dictionary, the biggest selling books on the planet are those of Sherlock Holmes. It isn't just the mystery, but solving one that intrigues us. In the book of Ephesians, Paul unfolds a mystery that had been withheld throughout the ages, and made known to him by revelation of the Holy Spirit. Intense controversy surrounded it. It took the world by storm, doing away with centuries of strict Jewish conformity to the Law of Moses, and ushering in a new era of freedom in Christ for all people.

Salvation and redemption in Christ is not revolutionary to us, and neither is the fact that the Israel nation was set apart by God to be the means whereby “the Seed” that would bless the world would come into being. In Paul's day, however, not only was Jesus as the Messiah revolutionary to the people of Israel, but it pulled the rug out from under the feet of its hierarchy.

Under the Old Covenant, the revelation of God was exclusively to the people of Israel. Throughout the Old Testament, there was a global perspective. “Israel, you are My chosen people and through you, I am going to bless the world.” It was something they'd known since Abraham, so what is distinct about the mystery Paul is now revealing? It is that the Jewish nation, called into being by God under Abraham as the chosen people of God, is now terminated as a spiritual entity. Together

with the Gentiles, there is a new global entity consisting of Jews and Gentiles in equality who are united with Christ, baptized by the Spirit into Christ, and are now one body of which Christ is the Head. The chosen people of God are no longer the Jewish people, but all those who are in Christ.

The distinction that now exists in the world is those who are in Christ and those who are in Adam. This was radical to the Jews. Prior to this, they had the sense that they were unique, which they were. They were elite, which they were, but all the blessings God had given them: adoption as sons, the divine glory, the covenants, the law, the temple worship, the patriarchs and promises were held in trust for the fulfillment of the purpose which God had called Abraham, and that came to fruition in Christ. Our histories, races, cultures and upbringings are irrelevant. If we are in Christ, we are God's chosen people.

PRAYER: Dear heavenly Father, thank you for your incredible love that extends to the entire world, and your wonderful gift of salvation through Jesus Christ.

TO REFLECT UPON: Do I think of myself as being among God's chosen because I am a Christian?